The Jerseyman

Ships 71st Birthday Celebration

Rich Thrash, Brass Team Volunteer

Friday, May 23rd was the 71st anniversary of the Battleship's original commissioning and is the day we affectionately refer to as her birthday. As in years past a big celebration was planned complete with a birthday cake, an invite to the governor to attend, and the return of several former crew members to share some of their experiences while onboard the ship with those gathered for the occasion.

This year the governor couldn't make it, but we did get to hear from two former crew members. The first to speak was an original WW II Plankowner, George R. Komer, who told a story about being the second person to ever take the helm of the Battleship and take her down the Delaware River on her first shakedown cruise. George had his son and grandson with him and after the ceremony he took a tour of the ship and got to see places he had never seen before. He had a great time and we were glad to have him onboard.

We had two crewman from the ships Vietnam period of service, Bertrand Trottier, the ships bugler, and James Flood, a quartermaster, now a maritime artist, and as I discovered later, quite the piano player too. But I digress, during the ceremony Bertrand also addressed the attendees and told stories about his life as the ships bugler. He is considered the Last Navy Bugler and he has a great website where you can learn more about a bugler's responsibilities on a Navy ship and the significance of his position on the battleship. His website address is *http://www.buglerusn.us/nj.htm*.

As mentioned earlier in the article about our Holiday Party Bertrand is the one who sent us the bugler insignias that were presented to Nan LaCorte. During the ceremony Bertrand and Nan played echo taps together and did an outstanding job. Jim Flood didn't speak but it was great having all three of those guys onboard for the celebration. After the remarks there was a wreath tossed into the river to honor sailors lost at sea during wartime and then it was time to cut the cake. Wielding a Naval Officers sword Bertrand and Nan cut the cake and it was then sliced up and served to those in attendance. All in all a great celebration made even better by those in attendance.

Did somebody say there was going to be cake?

Marine Guard presenting Colors at the beginning of the ceremony.

Nan LaCorte and Bertrand Trottier playing together.

The Honorable Patricia Jones, Trustee, Home Port Alliance, speaking to those gathered for the birthday celebration.

George R. Komer, WW II Plankowner addressing the crowd.

George was a little hesitant about making the trip down from New York to speak at this event when I first talked to him about it. I'm so glad he decided to join us, and I know he is glad he came. Great job George, thanks again!

Shot of the crowd gathered on the forecastle, they probably heard there was going to be cake.

Next Bertrand Trottier spoke to the crowd about his experiences onboard as the ships bugler.

I had been looking forward to meeting Bertrand since he helped us obtain the bugler insignias for Nan last year so it was great to finally meet him. Some of his remarks were very emotional and heart-felt, especially when he talked about quiet times on the ship at night playing the Tattoo followed by Taps.

Nan playing the Tatoo while Bertrand was speaking.

Following the speakers a wreath was tossed into the Delaware to honor all of the sailors lost at sea during wartime. George and his grandson, whose name I didn't get, did the honors of tossing the wreath.

Nan and Bertrand playing Echo Taps together.

The Navy's Last Bugler, back on the Big J blowing his horn.

If you look closely you can see Nan is sporting her official bugler insignia just below the patch on her right shoulder. She is the now ships official bugler, and we're all very proud of her.

Nan and Bertrand sharing a smile after they finished playing, I'm imagining a sort of collective sigh of relief.

Now that's what I call a cake knife. Nan and Bertrand prepare to cut the cake with the help of Captain Walter M. Urban, Jr. USNR (Ret.)

Following the ceremony we retired to the First Class Mess for lunch where this photo was captured. That's Jim Flood on the left, with Bertrand, Captain Urban and Nan.

At the end of the day Nan and I went to the Charthouse for dinner with Bertrand and Jim. The Charthouse is located at Penn's Landing directly across the river from the Battleship, affording diners there with a spectacular view of the ship. From that vantage point it was painfully obvious that her hull is desperately in need of a fresh coat of paint, which

should happen soon as mentioned in Phil Rowan's article on the page one. We also got a taste of Jim playing the piano as he played for about two hours hitting everything from Jerry Lee Lewis to Elton John, what a guy, great job!

They both had so much fun they had to come back again on Saturday. Bertrand was onboard to try and talk to some of his friends in California using some of the ships radio equipment. Jim had his own agenda which included having a good time.

There was a retirement ceremony onboard for a Navy Commander and at the end of it the ship was scheduled to fire one round from Mount 52. These guys got to pull the trigger and watch the gun fire, after that they were walking around with permanent grins. Great having both of these guys onboard, I enjoyed meeting them both and hanging out with them for dinner Friday night.

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allows for the transfer of ammunition between Turrets 2 and 3 in emergency situations, along this rail inside the ship.

For now the Walk Down Broadway has been added to the end of the Turret II tour. Visitors will complete the Turret II Tour in Forward Main Battery Plot where they get to pull the trigger to simulate firing the guns. Then they will climb a ladder up one level and be at the crossover at the head of Broadway. Entering the crossover they will get a chance to check out Emergency Steering and Main Damage Control before heading down Broadway. Visitors get to walk down six of the eight compartments along Broadway before they take a ladder above Engine Room three which takes them up to Deck 2 outside the HT Shop.

For the past five months the Brass Team has been focused on getting the tremendous amount of brass and copper along Broadway shining and looking good. We've also did a lot of spot painting and cleaning up and scavenging to find items to fill up empty racks and spaces to make it look more realistic.

On May 23rd, the ships 71st birthday, visitors and guests were given the first tour of Broadway and the reactions were amazing. Turret II tours are available every day at 11:00 am, and there is also a 1:00 pm Turret II tour on Saturdays and Sundays through the summer. The Turret II tours are $29.95 per person and tickets can be reserved online or call (866) 877-6262.

Almost every visitor I talk to when I'm on the ship always wants to know when the engine rooms will be open. The opening of Broadway gets us one step closer to that and as you read in Jason's article, getting people actually down in an engine room and fire room is in the planning stages.

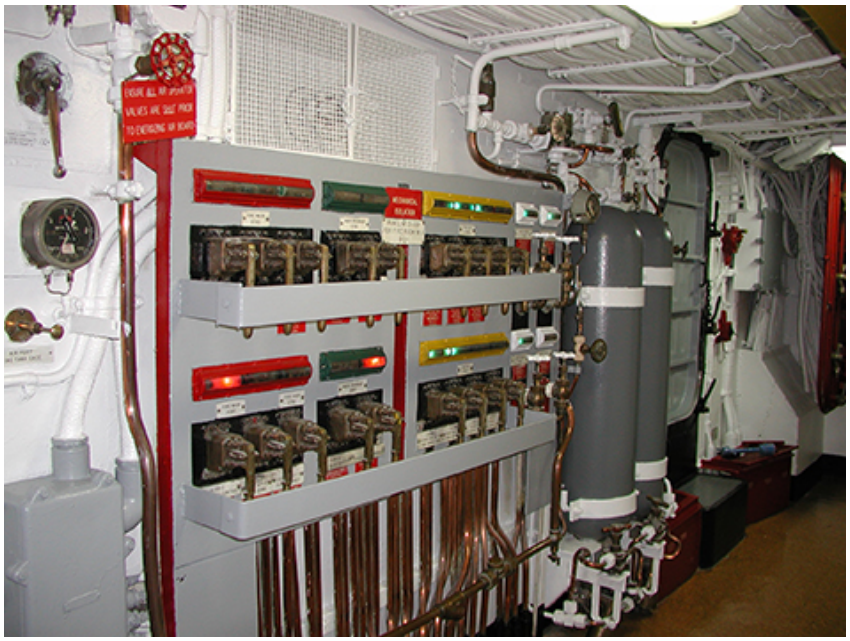
For all of you who have visited the Battleship in the past and say, why should I come back, I took the tour and saw everything there was to see. Well, now we have something to offer that you haven't seen, and it's amazing. Book your tour now, I promise you won't be disappointed.

First group to take the walk down Broadway on May 23rd.

This is the crossover at the head of Broadway. Just ahead and to the right is the hatch that leads into Emergency Steering, and to the left is the hatch to Broadway.

Emergency Steering, one of three places onboard where the ships speed and direction can be controlled.

A shot down Broadway from the crossover. The bulkheads are covered with gages, lights, valves and a host of other controls, truly the heart of Engineering.



Control station located in the first compartment outside fire room 1.

Looking back from where we just came, looks pretty good down here if I must say so myself.

Main status control board located along Broadway.

This is the crane I mentioned above. It is "parked" on a spur of the rail, which can be see passing through the hatch and heading aft. In the event the watertight door needed to be closed a section of the rail can be quickly removed and stowed allowing the door to be secured.

Here is where the tour comes up to Deck 2 just outside the HT Shop.

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New Challenge Coins now Available

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This beautifully crafted challenge coin depicts the USS New Jersey firing her 16-inch guns on one side. The stars within the blue band represent the 19 Battle Stars awarded to the ship.

On the reverse side, the ship is depicted as she sits today as a museum and memorial on the Camden, NJ Waterfront. The four stars on this side represent the New Jersey's four periods of service.

The Challenge Coin is available for a $20.00 donation. Coins are available on the Shop page of the ships website (*http://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/shop.php*) or in the landside store. All proceeds go to the on-going restoration and maintenance of our nation's most decorated battleship.

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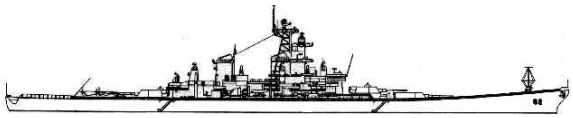

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Last updated on April 03, 2012.